

Message Text

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47

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SSO-00 IO-12 DPW-01 USIE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03

RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 NSCE-00 RSR-01 /083 W

----- 111903

O R 191050 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1882

INFO COMUSSAG NKP THAI IMMEDIATE

USDEL JEC PARIS IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC IMMEDIATE

COMUSMACTHAI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

DAO PAO SAIGON

UNCLAS SAIGON 08817

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (T E X T)

E. O.11652 N/A

TAGS MOPS, VS

SUBJECT: PRG SATURDAY PRESS BRIEFING, SAIGON, MAY 19, 1973

1. FOLLOWING REPORT IS BASED ON DEBRIEFING OF U. S. NEWS
CORRESPONDENTS WHO ATTENDED PRG SATURDAY PRESS BRIEFING.

2. MAJOR GIOI SON AT REGULAR WEEKLY PRG PRESS BRIEFING (MAY 19)
MADE YET ANOTHER CHARGE THAT U. S. PLANES WERE STRAFING
INNOCENT CIVILIANS IN VC CONTROLLED TERRITORY OF SOUTH VIETNAM.
HE SAID THAT BETWEEN MAY 12 AND 15, F-105 THUNDERCHIEFS
STRAFED IN AN AREA NEAR XA MAT, TAY NINH PROVINCE, NEAR
CAMBODIAN BORDER. HE TOLD CORRESPONDENTS HE HAD NO REPORTS
ON CASUALTIES OR PHOTOGRAPHS TO SHOW THEM VERIFYING THE U. S.
ATTACK. HE ADDED THAT THE ICCS HAD BEEN ASKED TO INVESTIGATE THE
MATTER. EMBASSY PRESS OFFICER HAS CALLED ABOVE CHARGE
" COMPLETELY FALSE."

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3. MAJOR SON SAID THAT THE PRG AND DRV WERE BOTH LIVING UP TO THE TERMS OF THE CEASEFIRE, THAT THEY WERE SCRUPULOUSLY ABIDING BY THE PARIS AGREEMENTS. HE SAID THAT UNFORTUNATELY THE U. S. AND GVN WERE NOT.

4. AT MID- POINT IN PRESS BRIEFING, DRV MAJOR NGUYEN PHU BINH CAME ON STAGE, MARKING FIRST TIME THE DRV HAS SHARED THIS SATURDAY ARENA WITH THEIR PRG COLLEAGUES. MAJOR BINH ADDRESSED HIS REMARKS TO AMERICAN GRAVE SITE INSPECTION CONDUCTED MAY 18 BY THE FOUR DELEGATIONS OF FPJMT. HE SAID, QUITE CORRECTLY, THAT THE DELEGATIONS HAD BEEN SHOWN GRAVES OF TWENTY- THREE US POWS WHO DIED IN CAPTIVITY, PLUS GRAVE OF AN UNIDENTIFIED U. S. AIRMAN WHO HAD BEEN KILLED IN CRASH OF A B-52 IN HANOI AREA. HE ALSO SAID, AGAIN QUITE CORRECTLY, THAT THE FPJMT DELEGATIONS HAD SEEN THE GRAVE OF A THAI PRISONER WHO DIED IN CAPTIVITY.

5. MAJOR BINH WENT ON TO REMARK THAT BODIES OF U. S. MILITARY PERSONNEL ARE SCATTERED THROUGHOUT NORTH VIETNAM AND RECOVERY OF THEIR BODIES DEPENDS ON GOOD WILL OF BOTH NORTH VIETNAM AND THE U. S. HE SAID THE HELP OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE PEOPLE THEMSELVES WILL BE NEEDED TO LOCATE BODIES BURIED IN SOME AREAS OF HIS COUNTRY. MAJOR BINH ASSERTED THAT SO FAR THE GOOD WILL NEEDED FOR SUCCESSFUL REPATRIATION OF U. S. REMAINS HAS COME ONLY FROM THE NORTH VIETNAMESE SIDE. THE U. S., ON THE OTHER HAND, HE SAID, HAS REFUSED TO CONTINUE DE- MINING OPERATIONS IN NORTH VIETNAMESE WATERS AND HAS FAILED TO PRESSURE THE GVN INTO PROVIDING ENOUGH GASOLINE, CARS AND DRIVERS FOR THE COMMUNIST FPJMT DELEGATIONS IN SAIGON. HE ADDED THAT ONLY LAST NIGHT (MAY 18) ELECTRICAL CURRENT HAD BEEN CUT OFF IN THE SAIGON QUARTERS OF PRG AND DRV DELEGATIONS. (IN POINT OF FACT, MOST OF SAIGON WAS WITHOUT ELECTRICITY FOR ABOUT TWO HOURS ON NIGHT OF MAY 18 BECAUSE OF BURNED CABLES AT TU DUC POWER STATION OUTSIDE CITY.)

6. MAJOR BINH WAS ASKED WHY VIETNAMESE NAMES HAD BEEN INSCRIBED ON HEADSTONES OF POWS WHO DIED IN CAPTIVITY. HIS REPLY: " TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR CEMETERY CARETAKERS." HE THEN ADDED THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO AVOID THE WORRY AND ANGER OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE PEOPLE WHILE THEIR COUNTRY WAS BEING ATTACKED BY B-52 BOMBERS, IMPLYING THAT GRAVES WITH AMERICAN MARKERS MIGHT BE DESECRATED.

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7. MAJOR BINH CLOSED HIS REMARKS ON REPATRIATION OF AMERICAN BODIES WITH A RATHER GHOULISH WISECRACK THAT DREW NO LAUGHTER FROM THE 13 U. S. CORRESPONDENTS: " IF PRESIDENT NIXON CAN VIETNAMIZE THE WAR IN SOUTH VIETNAM, WE (THE NORTH VIETNAMESE) CAN VIETNAMIZE THE NAMES OF POWS WHO DIED WHILE PRISONERS IN NORTH VIETNAM."

8. IN ADDITION TO FOREGOING ITEMS, PRG AND DRV BRIEFING
OFFICERS SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME CASTIGATING GVN FOR FAILURE TO
ADHERE TO CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT AND CITED NUMEROUS VIOLATIONS,
MOST OF WHICH NEWS CORRESPONDENTS HAD HEARD MANY TIMES
BEFORE.

WHITEHOUSE

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NMAFVVZCZ

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